



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

## Games & Activities

### Learning the neighborhood

To help your children learn important information about where they live, make it a game.

In addition to knowing their own addresses, they can learn your neighbors' names, which house they live in, and where kids can go in the neighborhood if they need help.

To make it more interesting, kids can draw a map showing which children live where, and finally, count the houses on the block and color them the correct color.

Any additional details that aid memory can be included:

"Heather lives here and we ride our bikes together; Ben lives there and he has a nice, big dog named Sebastian; Ethan lives here and we play ball on the same team; Mary lives here and she has twin brothers."

Use a big piece of paper for your map so there's plenty room to write and draw. □

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## Social Skills

### Special people like grandparents, relatives and friends

Your growing child needs people. She needs to see, listen to and feel the presence of people as a natural part of the world around her.

In addition to her parents, who are the most important people in her world, there are other special people who are very important: grandparents, relatives, friends and caregivers.

From them—and her parents—she learns that she belongs and that she matters.

Parents and other special people provide an atmosphere in which the young child learns she is important.

They notice the child, talk to her, laugh with her when she is happy and show their concern when she falls and hurts herself.

They say "hello" to her in a special way because she belongs to them and they belong to her.

In these interactions, they send a message to the child: "You are important. You matter. We care. You belong." Long before she can understand specific words, the child gets this message.

But it is a fact of modern life that in today's world, families get scattered. Most often children live in one com-

munity while their special people may be scattered from coast to coast.

When this happens, the child does not get all the messages she needs because her special people simply are not part of her daily life.

If this is the case for your family, you may well protest: "But what can I do? There are no special family people here?"

One simple solution is to try to schedule regular visits to your child's special people so that she has a number of contacts with them.

Such visits are extremely important and they are well worth the time and effort they require.

Another practical solution is to find substitute "special people" among your own circle of friends.

Each time they are in your house, they would be especially aware of ways they could pay special attention to your child.

You might also have a relationship with one or two older people who could serve as substitute grandparents—and you might be surprised at how delighted such older couples would be to play the role. □

## Lessons in the time of corona, part 1

Suddenly, in the past couple of weeks, most of you have been thrust into the role of teacher. The schools have abruptly cobbled together an instructional plan, and said, “Off you go. Good luck.”

While you are stammering “But my degree is in marketing!” and your kids are hollering, “That’s not the way Miss Evans/Mr. Jackman/fill-in-the-blank/ does it!”, let me inject a few ideas to support you at this time.

First of all, don’t panic. All children will be in the same boat, and teachers will know how to revise instructional strategies to help them all get back on track when life returns to the classroom.

Realize that most states are in the process of figuring out how to go forward, waiving testing requirements for this spring, so you should feel relieved of the responsibility to cram facts into them

If they are able to proceed with assignments as made online, encourage them to do so. If they reach a snag, help them if you can.

If the problem is bigger than both of you, calmly make a list of questions you will help them pursue with the teacher when classes resume.

But don’t panic. You and this situation will not be the ruination of their academic career. On the contrary, this is a huge opportunity for you and your kids to create an optimum learning environment, free of stress.

Children learn best when they are involved in activities that they have chosen, that allow them to explore and expand their understanding of the world.

Some of the very best schools use a project learning approach, in-

corporating the 3R’s into the learning activities.

Students can use and practice their reading, writing and math skills in meaningful projects that you can define together, with you available to help them frame the questions, structure the activities to learn about the topic, and methods to express what they have learned.

These ideas are adaptable for all children from kindergarten through high school.

Plan a morning meeting, after morning routines and chores have been completed. Initially, you will use this time to brainstorm things they are interested in learning about.

These topics will be unique to each child and family, though different children may find things that are related.

Narrow the ideas to those that can be explored within the limitations of your home, including via online resources, and your yard, assuming these restrictions last a while.

Then choose an idea that has scope—that is, once started on exploring one topic, it is likely naturally to lead to other questions.

For example, start with looking for signs of summer in the backyard, documenting findings in a notebook, with camera or drawing, then reading about the flora and fauna online.

This may lead off into a detailed exploration of caterpillars and all that follows in that cycle.

I’m just going to list a few to prime your pump, but the scope is endless.

Exploring family history and origins—lots of geography and history here; planning a trip to a place

the family has always talked about visiting—math and economics come in here; reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, to compare her life in “quarantine”—literature and history; what grows in our yard—science; what’s in our community?

Follow their passions, and above all—ask the kids: “What have you always wanted to learn more about?”

Structure is useful to us all. I would suggest that you meet with the children each morning, identify questions and specific learning activities for the day, as well as review what has been done. Identify a timeframe for quiet learning activities before they come back to you.

Brainstorm ways that reading and recording can be incorporated into all the explorations, as well as what next steps could be to deepen the learning.

I suspect that the excitement will spill over between siblings who may decide to collaborate, each at his/her own level, and even enliven the dinner table conversation.

Many of you will have been tempted to “play school” with far more rigid expectations in terms of formal lessons and teacher control.

I promise that, if you develop a learning project, real learning will go on, and you will get creative ideas about how kids can read, write and use other academic skills in ways that are meaningful to them, without the stress of being Teacher Mommy or Dad.

And with them immersed in their learning tasks, you can settle at your desk and get that work done for your own job. □

\*Apologies to Gabriel Garcia Marquez

## Helping brothers and sisters get along

How your child gets along with her brothers and sisters can make the difference in whether your family life is orderly (relatively speaking) or chaotic.

Here are some tips for peace on the home front:

- **Try not to compare one child with another.** They are different people.

Each has his or her own ways of reacting, special strengths and weaknesses, rates of growth and development.

- **Notice the things that make each child unique,** and encourage each child to develop special talents.

Accept your children's differences and you will help them accept themselves and each other.

- **Try to spend time each day alone with each child.** This "special time" should be the child's to use as he wishes.

You can offer a story, a game, or simply your presence, and let her what you will do.

These special times help you know and enjoy each child more and help them feel special to you so they can stop competing so much for your attention.

- **Try to provide cooperative activities.** For example, when you go to the supermarket, have one child spot an item you need, then have the other child get it and put it in the cart.

In addition, try to compliment each child any time you see them working and playing together. "Tommy, thank you for helping Michelle get dressed. You are really a big help to me." □

## Doing a good job as a parent

Many parents want very much for their children to be well accepted, to be "popular" in school.

But most parents recognize that it is not possible to produce a perfect child just as it is not possible to produce a perfect cake.

Children cannot be molded like dough. If we could, there would be many identical children!

Some children are outgoing, aggressive, or sensitive while others are quiet, compliant or passive.



Parents should not blame themselves or their children if the children's personalities or characteristics are not similar to the parents.

In fact, a characteristic which may be seen as a weakness in early life can be a virtue later on.

For example, the serious, quiet kindergartner may be the scientist or scholar of the future.

On the other hand, what may appear as an asset in the early years can interfere with effective maturation.

An example is the child who is great in Little League because of competitive nature, competitive parents, and/or physical strength.

The same child, however, may be unable to overcome his or her stardom in order to become a productive adolescent or adult.

Stress emerges when children are unable to meet particular standards set by parents who want their children to excel socially.

Since there is no way to predict how—or which—parental characteristics will be most influential, the best thing parents can do is to feel secure that they have done a good job as parents, then relax and allow their child to feel the effects of their relaxation. □

### FREE!

"Grandma Says" is a twice-monthly email that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews.

Issues are free of advertisements; email addresses are shared with no one. Get the next issue by signing up at:

<https://growingchild.com/grandma-says>

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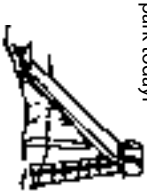

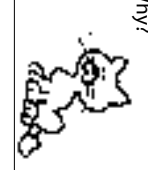


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**Growing Child** (birth-six years), and  
**Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

[www.growingchild.com](http://www.growingchild.com)

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
<p>2</p> <p>Draw a made-up animal and color it in your favorite colors.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Can you wiggle your ears? (No hands allowed.)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>How many colors can you name?</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Do you know how to roller skate?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Try this tongue-twister: rubber baby buggy bumpers</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Eat something good for you today!</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Go out for frozen yogurt or milkshakes.</p> 
<p>9</p> <p>Read Mom and Dad a bedtime story.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Have a picnic lunch.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Find a small cardboard box with a lid. Decorate it with crayons, markers, stickers and glitter.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Ask about the names of flowers you see in bloom now.</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Put several toys in a bag. Have your child pull them out one at a time. Can your child tell what they are before seeing them?</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Learn how to make a paper airplane.</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Draw a picture of a bird. Color it so it's a beautiful bird.</p> 
<p>16</p> <p>Spend some time at a park today!</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Get a ruler and measure: How long are your feet? How long is your longest finger? How long is your pillow?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Count the stars you see after dark.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>First of Muharram begins at sundown.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Which would you rather be: a cat or a dog? Why?</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Draw a "mystery" picture and ask others what they think it is. (Only you know.)</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Go to a local baseball game.</p> 
<p>23</p> <p>Have a cook-out dinner.</p> <p>30</p> <p>What's a sloth? Look it up.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Go out and look at the stars to- Practice whistling.</p> <p>31</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Help put the dishes away.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Count the doors in your house.</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>Watermelon! Eat some.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Ashura begins at sundown.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Talk about ways to show kindness to others.</p>